

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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Jersey City is “Keeping the Vision Alive” During the 8th Annual Lesbian & Gay Pride Festival

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy, the Municipal Council and the Division of Cultural Affairs will proudly celebrate the 8th Annual Lesbian & Gay Pride Festival from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00p.m. on Saturday, August 23rd at Exchange Place.

Sponsored by the **Jersey City Lesbian & Gay Outreach (JCLGO)**, the organizers of JCLGO have worked hard to foster through the annual Festival a better way to connect with the entire Jersey City community by focusing on the diversity of talent, the involvement of gay and lesbian artists in the community and their relevance in helping Jersey City become a recognized and respected cultural center in which all the residents of the State’s second largest municipality can take pride.

“The JCLGO’s Pride Festival is symbolic in Jersey City as it is part of the revitalization of our great city,” said **Mayor Healy**. “Every year the Festival brings a vibrant atmosphere for the many lesbian and gay communities in the Tri-State area. Organizations, such as the JCLGO, help produce social and political acceptance throughout the state of New Jersey.”

Music and entertainment, along with messages of encouragement and support, will be featured throughout the daylong festival. Arts & crafts, handmade artifacts, jewelry, sculptures, children’s rides and activities, face painting, exotic foods and delectable desserts as well as a variety of refreshments will also be available.

Founded by **Napolean Paul Mendoza** and **Miguel Cardenas**, the **Jersey City Lesbian and Gay Outreach** began on May of 2001, and later grew into an all-volunteer group in three short months. On August 25, 2001, they hosted Jersey City's 1st LGBT Pride Festival with the theme “Strength Through Visibility,” with an attendance of more than 1,000 festival-goers.

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Jersey City Lesbian and Gay Outreach created a venue for its members who felt that their voices were not being heard in the community. They have stood tall and instilled pride in so many who would otherwise be in fear of public scrutiny or harassment. The Jersey City Lesbian and Gay Outreach has been a beacon to those in need of support.

Jersey City Lesbian and Gay Outreach reached a milestone in 2004 in Hudson County when they raised the rainbow flag, a symbol of LGBT Pride, for the first time ever at the Hudson County Courthouse and at City Hall in Jersey City, a tradition that continues on; and

Michael Dzenis, a member of JCLGO since 2003 and Chairperson of entertainment for the 2008 Pride Festival, noted that JCLGO has forged stronger relationships with the local artist community, with Lesbian & Gay youth organizers and broadened the appeal of Lesbian & Gay programs and events to a larger segment of the diverse Jersey City community.

This year's theme, "Keeping the Vision Alive" reflects the spirit of the struggle from the past to the continued struggles of the present human rights movement. It also celebrates the social and political acceptance that Jersey City continues to offer and promote. Jersey City residents, businesses and government now work together in focusing on the things that matter such as the economic growth in the city, promoting safety and preventing crime rather than wasting energy in developing political obstacles that impair a person's rights because of the gender of whom they choose to love.

"I want to thank not only JCLGO, but also Hudson Pride Connections and the Pride Center of New Jersey along with the Hudson Diversity Action Council for their support and help in raising the profile of the Lesbian & Gay community in Jersey City to the point where we are not only recognized, but embraced by our elected leaders," **Dzenis** said.

For further information about the Lesbian & Gay Pride Festival, call (201) 333-5725 or the Division of Cultural Affairs at (201) 547-6921.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///